

## **MAKING ACTION PLANS** **STUDENT CENTERED TRANSITIONAL PLANNING**

### What is MAPS?

MAPS, or Making Action Plans, is a planning process used by teams to help students plan for their futures. The process uses a person-centered approach in which the plans for the future are built upon the student's dreams, fears, interests, and needs. It is directed and guided by the student and family and is facilitated by the team members.

### Why Are We Doing This?

The MAPS process is based on student need and student participation which is at the core of the IDEA mandate for transition planning for students, beginning at age 14. The MAPS process provides a structured format that helps with the task of gathering information for a transition plan that is an integral part of the IEP. It is a new way of thinking about assessment, providing a much broader view of the student's life than our traditional perspective of outlining deficits in specific skill areas. The MAPS process helps to build trusting and positive relationships among team members. Students who participate in formulating their own transition plan have more of a commitment to that plan and are developing self-advocacy skills.

### How Will We Do This?

This training will take place in two sessions. In the first session, we will practice doing a MAP. We will ask you to role play a student, parent(s), and any involved community representatives (DCYF, Mental Health, etc.). In the second session, we will use that information to write a transition plan.

## **PREPARING FOR A MAP**

Ideally, the MAP should take place well before the IEP / Transition Plan is due. Team members are identified and include the following:

1. Student
2. Parent(s) or guardians
3. Special Education Teacher (may be more than one teacher)
4. Teacher Assistant
5. Social Worker
6. Community based agency representatives (DCYF, Mental Health, ORS, etc.)
7. Other involved persons as requested by family (siblings, other relatives, or advocates)

Ample time should be set aside; at least one hour would be ideal. One person is identified as the facilitator and another as the recorder. Large poster-sized paper is posted within everyone's view. The entire process should remain simple, with just a few ground rules:

1. At each step, the facilitator will ask the student to respond first. Then family members, and then other team members are free to respond in random order.

2. All ideas will be recorded, using actual wording if possible. Information or ideas can be revised or deleted at any time.
3. Team members have the right to pass, or not discuss something.
4. Ideas are expressed in a positive way. The facilitator will ask that any negative information be restated in a more positive way.
5. Team members will wait until the final step of the MAP to begin to evaluate the merit of specific ideas. It is acceptable to record ideas that appear to be in conflict with one another. To discuss the merits of any one idea will rob the MAP of its forward momentum and student focus.

## **THE MAPS PROCESS**

The heart of the MAP is the five steps that follow. Using poster sized paper and marking pens, the recorder will write or illustrate (using simple graphics) the responses from the team members.

### **STEP 1: HISTORY**

In this step, the facilitator asks the student and his/her parents to briefly describe the student's personal history. The purpose of this step is to help all team members develop a more complete picture of the student's past, particularly the people and events that have shaped his or her life. It is not meant to be a complete or chronological account, but rather a series of highlights that begin to give a sense of the student in school, at home, and in the community. This step may be thought of as a "warm-up step," allowing students and their parents the opportunity to discuss information about the past in the ways they choose to share it.

If the student has a difficult time beginning this step, the facilitator may ask a few direct questions, such as: "When and where were you born?" "Do you have any brothers or sisters?" "Can you tell me about your first experiences in school?" "Who were your best friends when you were younger?" "Can you tell me about any special places you've visited or things you've done?"

Following the responses from the student and parents, other team members are invited to contribute to History. When it appears that the student's history is complete, the facilitator may wish to ask the team whether or not they learned anything new about his or her life.

### **STEP 2: DREAMS**

Step two of the MAP encourages the student, his or her parents, and other team members, to dream about the future. The purpose of this step is to discuss the possibilities for the student's short and long term future. The dreams that are identified will be used later to develop goal statements for the IEP/transition plan. As with the other steps, the student is asked first to contribute ideas, followed by the parents. The facilitator should encourage team members to think about dreams in the four outcome

areas associated with IEP/transition planning: Employment, Post-Secondary Education, Independent Living and Community Participation

At the same time, the **Dreams** step should be kept open-ended, allowing the student and other team members to consider many possibilities. When prompting questions are needed, try some of the following

To the student:

- "If you could have any job as an adult, what would it be?"
- "Where do you see yourself living one year from now? Who (if anyone) would be living with you?"
- "Have you ever thought about going to college?"
- "What is the one thing that would make school much better?"
- "If you could have anything - if money was no object - what would you wish for?"

To the parent:

- "What is your dream for your son/daughter?"
- "What are some of the things you've always wanted for your son/daughter?"
- "What would you see as the dream job for your son/daughter?"
- "What do you hope your son or daughter learns in school this year?"
- "What do you hope he/she learns on the job? In the community?"

Some team members may be worried that the dreams expressed by the student or parent may be "unrealistic." The facilitator may need to remind the team that dreams are not to be judged at this time. Perhaps not all dreams can be realized in the form in which they are expressed, but pieces of them can be acted on. *Dreams give a direction, a hope and a possible route on the MAP for further exploration.*

### STEP 3: FEARS

The student, family, and other team members are asked to talk about their fears for the student, especially those that may be barriers to realizing dreams. Facilitators will find that some people have an easier time talking about fears than others, and should remember to observe the ground rule regarding an individual's right to "pass." Students may express fears that are concrete and specific, or that may be more general, such as not being understood by others. Parents may talk of fears that include themselves, such as fears about their health, or their ability to provide for the student.

The **Fears** step is sometimes uncomfortable, sometimes revealing. It is sometimes somewhat emotionally charged and may require a short break to allow the team to lighten its mood.

### STEP 4 WHO is...?

In step four, the student and other team members are asked to describe him/her in as many ways as possible. Beginning with the student, the facilitator encourages team members to talk about his/her strengths, skills, likes and dislikes, personal qualities,

favorite activities, friends, and so on. This information helps team members to learn more about the student and, later in the process, to identify activities and resources that may be incorporated into the IEP/transition plan. Step four also invites the student and team to celebrate his/her accomplishments and gifts, something that is frequently lacking in the lives of students with disabilities.

While it may be appropriate to share some of the student's more negative characteristics, they should be stated in a respectful and objective way. If the opposite occurs, the facilitator needs to restate the relevant ground rules and help the team place their primary focus on the positive side of the person's characteristics.

#### STEP 5: NEEDS

In the final step of the MAP, the team members begin the process of reviewing and prioritizing information for the IEP/transition plan by brainstorming a list of needs for the student. The facilitator sets the stage for the discussion by reviewing key ideas from each of the previous four steps. This should help the team to focus on the MAP's overall direction and vision, as well as important details.

The student and other team members are then asked to consider the student's hopes, strengths, and interests as they begin to list activities, opportunities, and supports that the student will need now and in the future. Team members are reminded that their task is to brainstorm a list of potential needs, some of which may change as the plan is clarified.

**Needs** statements might include some of the following:

- Further vocational assessment
- Job exploration in a specific area
- Involvement in community activities
- Exploration of independent living options
- Additional community support services
- Skill development in a specific area

Remember: the focus is positive. Avoid statements such as "You need to..."

Following the brainstorming of an initial list of needs, the facilitator begins to bring closure to the MAP. The next task is to begin prioritizing the information to develop goals and activities for the student's IEP/transition plan. In moving toward a more focused plan, the facilitator may ask team members to identify one **Need** that they believe is most critical for the student. Another strategy may be to have the MAP transcribed onto regular-sized paper and sent to each team member prior to the next meeting. In this way, MAPS participants will be reminded of their discussions and have an opportunity to think about the next steps.

As a final note to the meeting, the facilitator spends one or two minutes asking participants how they felt about the process and what they learned from it.